

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A steel cord for reinforcing a synchronous belt, said steel cord consisting of:

at least two and at most ten strands twisted together with  $N_c$  twists per unit length in a first lay direction to form said ~~strands~~ cord, each of said strands consisting of at least two and at most nineteen steel filaments having a diameter between 30  $\mu\text{m}$  and 250  $\mu\text{m}$ , said filaments being twisted together with  $N_s$  twists per unit length in a second lay direction, opposite to said first lay direction, said filaments being made out of plain carbon steel or austenitic stainless steel, said steels being substantially free of quenched martensitic structures,

wherein, the number of twists per unit length a strand ~~locally~~ obtains during twisting of said cord is less than  $N_c + N_s$  such that when said cord is subjected to twenty load cycles, each load cycle starting at 0.2% of the breaking load of said steel cord going up to 20% of the breaking load of said steel cord and returning to 0.2% of the breaking load of said steel cord, said steel cord has a structural elongation on the return side of said twentieth load cycle of below 0.06% at 0.2% of the breaking load of said steel cord.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) The steel cord as in claim 1, wherein a load-elongation curve on said second to twentieth cycle remains in between two parallel, straight limiting lines said lines, being 0.06% of elongation apart.

4. (Previously Presented) The steel cord as in claim 1, wherein a straight line connecting the starting point and the turning point at said twentieth load cycle has a slope equivalent to an elongation modulus of more than 150 000 MPa.

5. (Previously Presented) The steel cord as in claim 1, wherein a straight line connecting the starting point and the turning point at said twentieth load cycle has a slope equivalent to an elongation modulus of more than 170 000 MPa.

6. (Previously Presented) The steel cord as in claim 1, wherein the elongation at 0.2% of the breaking load of the cord after the first cycle is below 0.03%.

7. (Withdrawn) A method of manufacturing a steel cord for reinforcing a synchronous belt according to claim 1, said process comprising the steps of:

- Providing said strands with a number of twists per unit length  $n_s$  lower or equal to the number of twists per unit length  $N_s$  on strand spools (2)
- Unwinding said spools (2) in a twister pay-off (1) with a pay-off tension
- Assembling said strands at an assembly point (8) before an entrance pulley (9) of a bunching machine (13)
- Winding said cord on a cord spool (12) after passing a reversing pulley (10) characterised in that

said pay-off tension is higher than 15 % of the breaking load of the strand for shifting the final lay formation closer to the assembly point.

8. (Withdrawn) The method of manufacturing according to claim 7, wherein the final lay formation is shifted to the assembly point by putting the said entrance pulley (9) or said reversing pulley (10) under an angle with respect to the plane formed by entering (51) and exiting cord (52).

9. (Withdrawn) The method of manufacturing according to claim 7, wherein the twists applied by said bunching machine on said strands are uninterruptedly lead to the exit of said twister pay-off.

Claims 10-13. (Canceled)

14. (Withdrawn) The use of steel cords as specified in claim 1, as reinforcement in a synchronous belt.

15. (Currently Amended) The steel cord as in claim 1, wherein the number of twists per unit length a strand ~~locally~~ obtains during twisting of said cord is equal to or less than  $N_s$ .